

insight

Asians offer fresh perspectives

International kindergarten follows Indian curriculum; analysts bridge Japan, China

It is no longer rare for Japanese to have foreign neighbors or colleagues. For some children, one of their first experiences communicating with somebody from outside their family might come in a class taught by a foreigner. In fact, with many parents stressing the importance of learning English — as well as mathematics and computer skills — from early on, some kids are enrolled at English-speaking schools run by foreign educators.

The phone at Little Angels English Academy & International Kindergarten in Mitaka, western Tokyo, rings off the hook with calls from parents hoping to get their children enrolled.

Rani Sanku, the 49-year-old head of the school, often answers the phone to hear a parent tell her, "We would love to have our child attend your school, even if it means moving."

Limited enrollment

But Little Angels' premises are about the size of a typical Tokyo house, which means not everyone can get their children in. The school, which opened in April 2004, currently has 44 pupils, 90% of whom are Japanese. There is also a long waiting list.

Only English is spoken at Little Angels, most of the educational materials are from India, and the pupils also study mathematics, computer skills and science, making the school more than just a kindergarten.

While Indian-style education is known for having children memorize double-digit multiplication tables, Lit-



Only English is spoken at Little Angels English Academy & International Kindergarten in Mitaka, Tokyo. Using educational materials mainly from India, foreign teachers instruct the pupils, 90% of whom are Japanese, in math, computer skills and science.

tle Angels incorporates games, songs and conversation pieces into its lessons.

"I wanted to show to my kids that the U.S. and U.K. are not the only foreign countries, and that there are all kinds of people in the world," said a mother with two children attending the school. Little Angels' teachers also come from Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore.

According to the Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry, there are 116 "foreigner schools" accredited by the government. Of these,

24 are international schools, where classes are taught in English, with about 34% of enrollment accounted for by Japanese nationals. There are 79 schools for Korean supporters of North Korea and five for Chinese residents of Japan. A large number of unaccredited schools are also operating.

Even for people who lacked a chance to learn a foreign language in their childhood, there are many opportunities to learn about other countries, such as when buying overseas securities

from foreign brokers in Japan.

In Tokyo's Toranomon district, about 20 people spent a recent evening intently listening to a seminar about Chinese stocks. Yukitaka Kino, 27, is an "Asian stock missionary" who has worked as a seminar presenter since last fall.

Born to a Taiwanese father and Japanese mother, Kino was raised in Taiwan until the age of 12. After graduating from a Japanese university, he entered the securities industry. Kino noted that "there are many ways in which the Chinese market differs from Japan," and he aims to act as a bridge between Japan and China in the world of finance. "I want to convey the situation, including the risks, in a way that is easy to understand."

Skilled stock

Zhang Xiu of Toyo Securities Co. is a 36-year-old expert in the Asian securities world. Raised in China, he is now responsible for research on Chinese companies as head of the brokerage's Asia department, where he oversees seven employees. He joined the company in 1998 — the wintry period following the bankruptcy of Yamaichi Securities Co. Even so, he focused on polishing his skills as a Japanese stock analyst.

"Attitudes toward information disclosure at Chinese companies resemble those of Japan 10 years ago," he pointed out, confident the Chinese market will continue to mature following the path once trod by its Japanese counterpart.

The number of Chinese nationals employed by the three brokerages particularly high on Chinese stocks — Toyo Securities, Naito Securities Co. and Aizawa Securities Co. — is currently 25 after a 40% jump in the past five years.